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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1491  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3544  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2930  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 000852

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GORKOWSKI)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/03/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR PHUM KG

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR ATTENDS KYRGYZ PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

REF: BISHKEK 813

BISHKEK 00000852 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador attended President Bakiyev's inauguration for his second term on August 2. The full-day ceremony was a study in contrasts. The morning event was tightly scripted and wholly professional, but the President appeared in poor health, prompting another round of rumors about one or more grave illnesses that he might have. For the afternoon portion, Bakiyev appeared to have recovered, but the planning seemed to have stopped at noon, resulting in a haphazard series of faux pas, culminating with the diplomatic corps standing in the rain in the dark, waiting for a President who never appeared. Russian Ambassador Vlasov was conspicuously absent from the ceremony, with several different reasons offered for his absence. Ambassador had a good discussion with Foreign Minister Sarbayev on the margins of the event. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Ambassador attended President Bakiyev's second term inauguration on Sunday, August 2 in the Kyrgyz White House's Great Hall. The full-day ceremony was a study in contrasts. The morning inauguration ceremony was carefully and effectively managed. Registration for attendees began promptly at 0830, and right at 0930, the ceremony itself began with a presentation of ceremonial flags and insignia by goose-stepping soldiers. The ceremony was carried live on national television.

¶3. (C) The choice to cover the President's entry into the Great Hall live was a serious (but the only) error made by the organizers, however. Guests at the inauguration, watching the live coverage on wall-mounted television monitors, observed Bakiyev step carefully from his car. He started out walking normally, but gradually flagged as he mounted one set of stairs after another, almost stumbling at one point. When he finally reached the Great Hall, he was visibly sweating and gray with fatigue. His wife and son Maxim accompanied him on his arduous journey, and Maxim was at the President's side throughout the ceremony, playing the

role of heir apparent.

¶4. (C) After the President swore his oath to uphold the Kyrgyz Constitution and defend Kyrgyzstan's independence, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced that he was there to represent all CSTO Presidents in congratulating Bakiyev. Then, speaking in Kyrgyz with simultaneous translation into Russian, and still very noticeably mopping his brow, Bakiyev gave a short but effective speech laying out his priorities for his second term. Bakiyev began with words of humility, and said that he hoped one hallmark of his second term would be not promising more than he could deliver. He noted that he had inherited a difficult situation when he began his Presidency, and so had spent most of his first term trying to ensure the safety and security of the Kyrgyz Republic. But with his second term, he wished to focus more on increasing prosperity, and in particular on reducing corruption, and bringing the government closer to the people. He received a hearty ovation for his concise speech, and then a group of opera singers in national costume lustily sang the Kyrgyz National Anthem.

"Now I want some congratulations from a MAN"

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¶5. (C) The subsequent dinner appeared to have a different, and far less competent, set of organizers. The diplomatic corps was directed to sit at tables grouped by geographic region, without any opportunity to mingle. The President appeared to have recovered when he visited the diplomatic enclave (there were four other dining rooms full of guests). He was in a jocular mood, challenging the diplomatic corps to "Stop looking so glum. Sing! Dance! Have some vodka!", the

BISHKEK 00000852 002.2 OF 003

last of which he encouraged through personal example. The doyenne of the Bishkek diplomatic corps, the Turkish Ambassador, stood and offered the President the collective congratulations of the assembled diplomats. The President thanked her, looked around, and said, "now I want some real congratulations from a man." The rest of the diplomatic corps looked on, aghast, at this slight to its senior -- and very well-liked -- member. Breaking the uncomfortable silence, the Uzbek Ambassador, a man, finally stood up and offered some platitudes about the strong relations between their countries.

¶6. (C) Daniyar Usenov, the President's chief of staff, was the only non-Western person at the Ambassador's table, and he, like the President, had clearly downed more than a few shots of vodka. In Usenov's case, this led him to a surprising degree of friendliness, far surpassing any of his recent dealings with the Embassy. Conspicuous in his absence was Russian Ambassador Valentin Vlasov, normally a prominent -- and take-charge -- guest at official Kyrgyz functions. Queried by the Ambassador regarding this, Foreign Minister Sarbayev said that Vlasov was ill, while another Kyrgyz official said that Vlasov was not there because he was on vacation. A CIS Ambassador said that Vlasov was still in Issyk-Kul, attending to CSTO business (even though the CSTO meeting was over and other CSTO Ambassadors attended the inauguration).

Waiting for the Second Coming

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¶7. (C) Before the assembled diplomats had finished eating, they were abruptly ushered outside to await the President's imminent arrival for a second, more formal greeting, whereupon it began to rain. Attempts to return to the shelter of the dining room were rebuffed. Some diplomats headed for a nearby yurt, but were told by guards that it was for the President's use only. Others attempted to break out of the White House security perimeter, and some few made it before the guards became worried about the disappearance of the President's diplomatic audience, and closed the exit.

The dean of the diplomatic corps, the Turkish Ambassador, failed in her breaks for freedom and was unceremoniously escorted back by security guards -- twice. After several hours of intermittent showers, the soggy diplomats were released into the night, having witnessed an impressive fireworks display but without the President ever making an appearance.

On the Margins

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¶ 8. (C) In two meetings on the margins of the inauguration, the OSCE representative told the Ambassador that the final vote tally had been 76 percent for Bakiyev, and that the Central Election Commission had thrown out the results from some particularly egregious precincts, as Maxim Bakiyev had promised would happen in a recent lunch with the Ambassador (see reftel.) (Note: Embassy cannot confirm the final vote totals. The CEC has told us that they are still reviewing protocols, and according to the Kyrgyz election code, the final results should be released on Tuesday, August 4. End note.)

¶ 9. (C) Foreign Minister Sarbayev told the Ambassador that the President would be on vacation for most of the rest of the month of August, and therefore would not be available to meet high-level visitors during that time. Sarbayev also warned against scheduling any Parliamentary visits to Manas Transit Center until the new agreement is fully implemented. He did not want to allow any possibility of MPs playing "gotcha" by pointing out that nothing has changed under the new agreement.

Comment

BISHKEK 00000852 003.2 OF 003

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¶ 10. (C) Bakiyev's frail appearance during his inauguration prompted another round of rumors about one or more grave illnesses that he might have. His son Maxim's prominence encouraged them. However, Bakiyev's vigorous -- if at times inappropriate -- performance at the diplomats' dinner appears to contradict them.

GFOELLER